

The papers seemed on the whole superior to those brought forward at our Association, at least there were fewer communications of trivial importance, or old subjects warmed up afresh. Our neighbours, however, find discussion a difficult thing; it is apt to degenerate at once into a conversation between two heated opponents. There was evident also a want of order, punctuality, and respect for authority; previous arrangements were altered, or the decisions of the chair set aside, in the coolest manner. A want of proper organisation arose from the fact that M. Claude Bernard, the president, never made his appearance on account of ill-health; but M. Cornu, the general secretary, was a host in himself; and as M. de Quatrefages has accepted the presidentship of the next meeting at Lyons, and Prof. Wurtz, whose energy and good nature were unfailing at Bordeaux, is to occupy the post of honour the year following, we may hope that the young Association will quickly get over the diseases of infancy.

Festivities were not wanting. Chief among these was a grand reception by the Mayor at the Hôtel de Ville, but I may specially mention a *déjeuner* given by the French chemists to their brethren from England and Belgium, Holland and Spain. Some of us also will never forget the private hospitality we met with.

But the excursions were the great feature of the meeting, and in them the copy certainly surpassed the original. They played a most important part in the proceedings; Saturday and Tuesday were wholly devoted to them; and they took place on Sunday, on Monday afternoon, and through the three days after the close of the sittings.

There was the expedition to Arcachon, where the *savans* not only strolled about the pretty watering-place, but studied natural history at an aquarium which, unlike that at Brighton, was a very unpretending building, but well stocked with interesting marine animals, and paid an especial visit to the oyster-beds that have been formed on sandbanks in the middle of the land-locked sea in front of the town. Here we traced the growth of the favourite mollusc from the spat on tiles, till it was large and plump, and we had explained to us the difficulties of its cultivation, and the ravages committed by a *murex* called *Car-maillot* (I am spelling at random) and by the hermit crabs. There was an antiquarian expedition to Perigueux and Les Eyzies, where, on each side of the valley, the limestone cliffs are fissured with caverns, in which men lived, and worked in flint and bone, at that remote period when reindeer and mammoths roamed over the soil of France. There was an expedition to see the new "docks" and huge engineering works of the Garonne, which M. Joly carefully explained; and there was a larger excursion by boat and rail down the Gironde to the open sea, where geologists had an opportunity of inspecting the cliffs of chalk and flint, and then the Tertiary strata, beside discussing the subsidence of the Gascon shore, and the shifting of the sandhills, and seeing how they are now prevented from swallowing up villages and churches as they did of old.

But the great excursion was the final one, which extended over three days, and was unique in my experience. Twenty members of the Association were officially deputed to report mainly on the industrial establishments of the Landes and Lower Pyrenees; and any other members were welcome to join the party. Thus was secured a good nucleus of really scientific men, while the expedition had a serious purpose, and it was evidently to the advantage of the establishments visited that we should be well received. The Landes, as is generally known, is a large tract of country which, until lately, was a marsh of sand scarcely capable even of affording pasture; but now it is reclaimed, and the centre of thriving industries. Forests of pine (*Pinus maritima*) have been planted for hundreds of miles, and the trees are regularly scored for turpentine; maize and other crops are grown; and the undergrowth of

heather supplies food for myriads of bees. At Labouheyre we inspected the means employed for separating the rosin from the turpentine, and the machinery for impregnating the pine wood with sulphate of copper, so as to fit it for railway sleepers and telegraph posts; and though the thermometer was at 32° C. (say 90° F.) in the shade, and anything you like to imagine in the sun, we also went carefully over some blast furnaces that are used principally for reducing by charcoal the Spanish iron ores which, being free from sulphur and phosphorus, yield an excellent metal.

Here the party was sumptuously entertained by M. Alexandre Leon; and from this stage special trains or special carriages were placed freely at our disposal by the Compagnie du Midi. The next place visited was a primary school at Morcenx, for the gratuitous instruction of the children of their *employés*, which had been carried on by M. Surell the former, and M. Simon the present director of the Railway Company. We found the boys at military drill; we took part in the distribution of prizes, the Association itself giving a reward to the best boy and girl; and as scientific men, we were particularly interested in the good provision for "object lessons," the chemical and galvanic apparatus, and the care with which the children were taught the rudiments of physical and physiological science. Rejoicing at this proof that the reclamation of the Landes was not confined to the soil, we pursued our way to Dax, and spent Friday night at the Thermal Baths, where we enjoyed the hospitality of Drs. Larauza and Delmas, the physicians of the establishment. The springs of nearly boiling water that gush from many parts of the contorted strata under the town were duly examined, and so were the deposits of rock-salt that were accidentally discovered a year or two ago, and which promise to prove an important source of wealth.

From these hot springs we travelled southwards across the Spanish frontier to Irun, and then a good walk through beautiful scenery took us among the granite mountains to the mines of Bidassoa. Here we saw how large faults in the primæval rock are filled with crystallised carbonate of iron, and how the rich ore is won.

Returning into France, where, through the kindness of M. D'Eichtal, a dinner was awaiting us, the expedition found its way back to Bayonne; and, doubtless, on the morrow some of the party visited the pre-historic camp and the ancient abodes of the Troglodytes, according to the programme; but the chemists generally preferred a quiet day at Biarritz.

J. H. GLADSTONE

THE SPIRIT OF SCIENTIFIC CONTROVERSY

AS if in atonement for a prolonged neglect, the study of the organisation of fossil plants is now receiving wide-spread attention. The task first undertaken by Henry Withan has now been shared by many observers. The result is that we already possess a much more complete acquaintance with the ancient vegetation of the globe than we did even a few years ago. But whilst this is undoubtedly true, it is equally so that wide differences of opinion on important points still exist amongst those who have taken a leading part in this investigation. Thus, M. Brongniart and Dr. Dawson believe that the Sigillariæ were Gymnospermous Exogens; whilst Mr. Carruthers and myself are convinced that they were Lepidodendroid Cryptogams. In common with Prof. Schimper and Mr. Carruthers, I regard the whole of the Calamites as Cryptogamic plants, having Equisetaceous affinities; whilst M. Brongniart, M. Grand-Eury, and, perhaps partially, Dr. Dawson, deem some of them to be Equisetaceans, and others Gymnospermous Exogens. Mr. Carruthers and Mr. Binney regard the fruits known

by the name of *Volkmania Binneyi* to be the cones of Calamites. On the other hand, whilst I do not deny that such may possibly be their nature, I contend that we have neither proof nor even probable evidence sustaining this idea. Dr. Dawson says that Asterophyllites and Annularia are very distinct plants. Mr. Carruthers affirms that they are not. M. Grand-Eury and myself contend that Asterophyllites is wholly distinct, both in type and organisation, from Calamites. Mr. Carruthers believes that Asterophyllites and Annularia are alike the foliage of Calamites. It would be easy to multiply illustrations proving the existence of these opposite conclusions on important points amongst those observers who have enjoyed the best opportunities of forming reasonable opinions on such subjects. It is sufficiently obvious that some of us must be in error on these questions; possibly each of us is so in a greater or less degree; but when we regard the scientific status of the observers to whom I have referred, leaving myself out of the question, I ask, are they men whom we can accuse lightly of carelessness or ignorance? Must we not rather infer that each man has observed special facts leading him to his own conclusions, and that what we want is a careful comparison of such facts with those which have led our fellow-labourers in an opposite direction to ourselves? Whatever may be the explanation of these discrepant opinions, surely our mutual duties are clear. If any of us thinks that his fellow-labourer has made mistakes (and who has not) let him say so openly, and not suggest the idea by indulging in deprecatory insinuations. Let his opposing *argumentum* be *ad rem*, and not *ad hominem*. Further, let it be *ad rem* and not *ad alteram rem*. Let it not rest upon mere analogies, which may or may not be sound. Let us not reject a conclusion before we know all the facts from which it is drawn, merely because we think we have reason to deem it an impossible one. We have all lived to see many such conclusions take their places as undoubted truths.

One source of danger on these points, in the case of fossil botany, arises from the circumstance that though the ancient types of vegetation bear definite relations to the living ones, very remarkable differences present themselves in the combinations of the vegetative and reproductive organs in the two cases. Who, for instance, could have anticipated, from his knowledge of living plants, such an union of the usual vegetative organs of a cycad with an altogether anomalous reproductive system as we see in *Williamsonia gigas*. Many such examples will occur to those familiar with the subject. Hence, whilst a knowledge of living plants is absolutely indispensable to the student of fossil botany,—he cannot have too much of it—we must not allow our knowledge of recent combinations of vegetative and reproductive structures unduly to bias our judgment as to what may occur amongst fossil plants. Whilst we fully recognise the persistence of types, we must equally recognise the wonderful modifications which they have undergone in primæval times.

The conclusions to which these views lead me are very simple ones. The complex problems of palæophytology require harmonious and trustful co-operation amongst observers if truth is to be discovered. Let us supply this in the spirit of cordial fellow-labourers, and not as rivals in pursuit of a fleeting reputation which cannot be shared with others. We shall never raise ourselves by pulling others down. I will not quote the special expressions that are present to my mind whilst penning these lines; but it would be easy to do so, and to show that no possible benefits can accrue to science from their use. We can easily correct our mutual errors, we cannot so easily sooth wounded feelings, or restore shaken confidences. We aim at being the high priests of nature; let us try to banish all disturbing personal and selfish influences from the temple.

These words of warning may appear superfluous, be-

cause they embody mere truisms, equally applicable to every branch of human inquiry, or impertinent, seeing that in the fervour of earnest work, I may have erred in the same way as my neighbours. The fact is, that, like others of my earlier fellow-workers, I am rapidly approaching the autumn of life, and peace and harmony now appear more precious to me than they did in bygone years, when youthful ambition was alike active and inconsiderate. Happily ours are not pursuits which require us to cry *væ victis!* Just in proportion as we meet our opponents in a loving and harmonious spirit, without abandoning, in any degree, our earnest contention for what we believe to be truth, shall we, in our declining years, review our past labours with satisfaction and not with sorrow.—*Sic esto.*

W. C. WILLIAMSON

DISTRIBUTION OF HEAT IN THE SPECTRUM

PROF. J. W. DRAPER has communicated to *Silliman's Journal of Science and Art* for September a very important article under the above heading. After detailing a series of experiments on the distribution of the heat of the whole visible spectrum, of the more refrangible and of the less refrangible region, by rock-salt, flint-glass, bisulphide of carbon, and quartz, he thus sums up the results:—

"The important fact clearly brought into view by these experiments is, that if the visible spectrum be divided into two equal portions, the ray having a wave-length of 5768 being considered as the optical centre of such a spectrum, these portions will present heating powers so nearly equal that we may impute the differences to errors of experimentation. Assuming this as true, it necessarily follows that in the spectrum any two series of undulations will have the same heating power, no matter what their wave-lengths may be.

"But this conclusion leads unavoidably to a most important modification of the views now universally held as regards the constitution of the spectrum. When a ray falls on an extinguishing surface heat is produced, but that heat did not pre-exist in the ray. It arose from the stoppage of ether waves, and is a pure instance of the conversion of motion into heat—an illustration of the modern doctrines of the conservation and transmutation of force.

"From this point of view the conception that there exist in an incident ray various principles disappears altogether. We have to consider an incident ray as consisting solely of etherial vibrations, which, when they are checked by an extinguishing substance, lose their *vis viva*. The effect that ensues depends on the quality of the substance. The vibrations imparted to it may be manifested by the production of heat, as in the case of lamp-black, or by chemical changes, as in the case of many of the salts of silver. In the parallel instance of acoustics clear views have long ago been attained, and are firmly held. No one supposes that sound is one of the ingredients of the atmosphere, and it would not be more incorrect to assert that it is something emitted by the sounding body than it is to affirm that light or heat, or actinism, are emitted by the sun.

"The progress of actino-chemistry would be greatly accelerated if there could be steadfastly maintained a clear conception of the distinction between the mechanism of a ray and the effects to which that ray may give rise. The evolution of heat, the sensation of light, the production of chemical changes, are merely effects—manifestations of the motions imparted to ponderable atoms—and these in their turn can give rise to converse results, as when we gradually raise the temperature of a substance the oscillating movements of its molecules are imparted to the ether, and waves of less and less length are successively engendered."